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Sustainable development: International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The recent major disasters in Asia attest to the fact that much more needs to be done to invest in, and systematically implement, disaster risk reduction. Over three years have passed since the adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters and, although progress has been made on a variety of fronts, the world is not on track to achieve the Hyogo Framework's sought-after outcome of a substantial reduction in disaster losses by 2015. A major scaling-up of efforts and resources is therefore needed urgently.

The present report provides an overview of progress on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, in response to General Assembly resolutions 62/192, 61/199 and 61/200. It also considers trends in disasters and disaster risks, and the development of coordination, guidance and resourcing through the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction system. Details on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action and international cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon are contained in the annexes.

* A/63/150 and Corr.1.

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I. Trends in disasters and disaster risks

1. During the period July 2007-June 2008, a total of 364 disasters caused by natural hazards affected more than 212 million people, killed more than 240,000 and produced economic damage of more than $77 billion.[1] Compared to the previous reporting period, the number of people killed was 13 times higher and the economic costs more than doubled, though the number of people affected was similar. Multiple disaster events, such as the five consecutive cyclones in Madagascar and typhoons in the Philippines, made people who had already been affected very vulnerable in the face of each new disaster event. Cyclone Nargis, leaving around 140,000 people dead or missing in Myanmar and the Sichuan earthquake in China, with a death toll of over 87,000, were the most catastrophic events. Each underlined the importance of disaster risk reduction, particularly the need for effective people-centred early warning systems and earthquake resistant construction.

2. Disasters related to hydro-meteorological hazards, in particular floods and storms, have continued to rise over recent years. Over the period 2000-2007, their frequency increased by 8.4 per cent annually on average, and their average annual cost exceeded $80 billion, making up the largest source of disaster costs.[2] Those trends point to a growing problem of increased vulnerability related to climate risks, particularly for the poorest countries, that needs the urgent attention of Member States.

3. The experience of Bangladesh demonstrated that disaster risk reduction, including response preparedness, can save lives and livelihoods when disaster strikes. Cyclone Sidr hit the most heavily populated low-lying area in the world, killing 3,400, leaving 1,000 people missing and millions without livelihoods. Although tragic, the losses were much less severe than those of a similar cyclone in 1970, which caused 300,000 deaths, and another in 1991, which killed 138,000 people. Analysis shows that this result is directly due to the efforts of the Government, supported by international partners. The Islamic Republic of Iran is another example where disaster risk reduction saved lives in 2007 during Cyclone Gonu.

4. Environmental degradation continues to be one of the main factors responsible for increased vulnerability to natural hazards. A global assessment study by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) showed that 20 per cent of the world's mangroves have been lost since 1980.[3] The losses were worst in Asia, where 1.9 million hectares of mangrove forests were destroyed by new shrimp and fish farms, tourist operations and other development aimed at supporting growing coastal populations, which made coastal areas more vulnerable to the impact of storms and cyclones. Worldwide, some 70 per cent of the 5.2 billion hectares of dry lands used for agriculture are already degraded and threatened by desertification. The world's highest rate of desertification is taking place in sub-Saharan Africa, where agricultural production is declining at the rate of almost 1 per cent per year.[4] To date, efforts to reduce drought risks and combat

[1] See EM-DAT: the International Disaster Database, Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance/Centre for Research and Epidemiology of Disaster, July 2008.

[2] Centre for Research and Epidemiology of Disaster, 2008.

[3] FAO, *The World's Mangroves 1980-2005*, Forestry Paper 153 (Rome, 2007).

[4] FAO, *State of the World Forests 2007* (Rome, 2007).

deforestation have failed to stop rapid global forest loss, despite some localized successes.

5. In 2008, more than half of the world's human population, about 3.3 billion people, will be living in urban areas. By 2030, that number is expected to swell to almost five billion. The unprecedented scale of urban growth will be particularly notable in Africa and Asia, where urban populations will double between 2000 and 2030.[5] High population density, insufficient livelihoods, lack of access to basic services and other aspects of social vulnerability will place people at high disaster risk. Moreover, poorly planned mega-cities and other urban environments are often located in high risk areas for earthquakes, floods, landslides and other technological hazards.

6. Disaster statistics, continued environmental degradation, climate change and the growth of unplanned urban areas together point to a compelling need for the urgent scaling-up of the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disaster.[6]

7. The Bali Action Plan of the Framework Convention on Climate Change[7] now includes specific language on disaster risk reduction, calling for enhanced action on disaster risk reduction strategies to lessen the impact of disasters on developing countries, and on risk management strategies, including risk transfer mechanisms such as insurance. Those topics will be the subject of a formal workshop at the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Poznan, Poland, from 1 to 12 December 2008. At the climate change negotiations in Bonn in June 2008, parties recommended the inclusion of disaster risk reduction strategies and the Hyogo Framework for Action in national policies and programmes in the context of the Nairobi Work Programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change.

II. Reduction of vulnerability to severe climate-related hazards

8. In response to General Assembly resolution 61/200, the Strategy secretariat has engaged the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), regional organizations and individual Governments in several workshops and high-level policy forums to gain better understanding among policymakers of the benefits of linking existing frameworks for risk reduction to climate change adaptation and poverty reduction. Advocacy efforts included high-level policy dialogues with parliamentarians and collaboration with the European Parliament and the Global Legislators Organization for a Balanced Environment. The League of Arab States adopted disaster risk reduction as a key component of climate change adaptation for the Arab Regional Framework Action Plan for Climate Change. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kampala in November 2007 adopted the Lake Victoria Climate Change Action Plan, advocating greater financial support for climate change adaptation and better disaster management on the basis of the prior

[5] United Nations Population Fund, *State of the World Population 2007* (New York, 2007).

[6] A/CONF.206/6 and Corr.1, chap. I, resolution 2.

[7] Adopted by the Conference of Parties at its thirteenth session, held in Bali from 3 to 15 December 2007 (FCCC/CP/2007/6/Add.1, decision 1/CP.13).

recommendation of the African Ministers' Council on Water to prioritize the Hyogo Framework for Action as a part of the urgent action required on climate change. UNDP has developed a programming framework to climate-proof the Millennium Development Goals and started a pilot Climate Risk Management Technical Support Project in four countries (Armenia, Ecuador, Indonesia and Mozambique) aimed to build in-country capacity to analyse risks related to climate variability and change and to define risk management solutions.

9. In response to General Assembly resolution 61/199 on international cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Governments of Ecuador and Spain and the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction have helped to consolidate the Guayaquil-based International Research Centre on the El Niño Phenomenon, and its role in the Western South America region (see annex II).

III. Progress made in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action*

A. Progress at the national level

10. Increased commitment by Governments, parliamentarians, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders has resulted in some good progress — although still limited — in implementing disaster risk reduction in many parts of the world. This is manifested through a number of countries adopting instruments to guide policy and enact legislation for risk reduction, while others have integrated risk reduction into their national development plans or poverty reduction strategies.

11. At present, 45 States have established multi-stakeholder national platforms for disaster risk reduction and at least 10 more are in advanced stage of preparation. A total of 120 Governments have designated official focal points for the implementation, follow-up and monitoring of progress of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

12. Despite that positive trend, financial and human resources are often scarce and it remains a challenge for many countries to sustain their multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism or make real investment in risk reduction measures beyond strategies and institutional coordination, with appropriate legal backing.

B. Progress at the regional level

13. Several regional organizations have adopted resolutions and realigned strategies in support of the Hyogo Framework for Action. The Strategy secretariat increased its regional presence to further develop regional partnerships, support regional and national disaster risk reduction mainstreaming efforts and platforms and develop region-specific information and knowledge products. The partnership between the Strategy secretariat and the World Bank contributed to enhanced collaboration with regional organizations on disaster risk reduction.

* See annex I for additional information.

C. Progress at the international level

14. The Strategy secretariat continued to facilitate and promote the engagement of numerous partners in disaster risk reduction in a coordinated manner. Specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations continued to enhance their own commitments to the Hyogo Framework for Action. The UNDP Strategic Plan (2008-2011) urges UNDP to continue to extend its support to programme countries within the context of the Hyogo Framework for Action in close coordination with the Strategy secretariat. The World Food Programme (WFP) Strategic Plan (2008-2011) includes disaster risk reduction as a key objective. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council endorsed a new Medium-term Strategy (2010-2013), which identifies disasters and conflicts as one of six core priorities for the organization through 2013. In addition, work on disaster risk reduction will be integrated across all priority areas and is recognized as a central element of the work of UNEP on climate change adaptation. The thirtieth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent adopted in November 2007 a declaration, resolving to integrate environmental degradation and adaptation to climate change in disaster risk reduction and disaster management policies and plans. The Red Cross/Red Crescent movement is reviewing its policy to promote longer-term community-based development approaches on risk reduction.

15. The Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, a partnership between the World Bank and the Strategy, has contributed to the scaling-up of the World Bank's own commitment to mainstream disaster risk reduction into poverty reduction strategies and climate change adaptation, while providing technical assistance and seed resources for national programmes and recovery assessment and operations.

16. Key United Nations coordination mechanisms have taken action on disaster risk reduction, including linkages to climate change adaptation, in coordination with the Strategy — the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, the United Nations Development Group and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

D. Coordination and guidance by the Strategy system

17. As noted, Strategy stakeholders at all levels have a fundamental role in supporting the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action. Following the first session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Geneva in June 2007, the Strategy system was strengthened to provide better coordinated support and guidance to regional, national and local actors. The second session of the Global Platform, to be held in June 2009, will serve to initiate the mid-term review of the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action expected by 2010.

18. The Strategy system's joint work programme, undertaken by a core set of the Strategy system partners, is a concerted effort to contribute to international coordination and scaling-up of action.[9] Collaboration with other stakeholder networks and thematic platforms, such as the ProVention Consortium, provides additional support to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action. In addition, I intend to appoint a new Assistant Secretary-General for disaster risk reduction.

19. An important activity set out in the Hyogo Framework for Action is to report on progress and monitor risk trends. The Strategy has established a global, regional and national reporting system with the partners, releasing a global assessment report every two years that are fed into the sessions of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. This exercise constitutes a core function of the Strategy, with strong support from UNDP and the World Bank. The next report will be launched in May 2009. Baseline assessments have been undertaken in all regions and Governments are preparing national reports. A global risk update and in-depth case studies are undertaken by Strategy partners guided by technical and research institutions.

20. The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction regional offices played a catalytic role in mobilizing support to regional and national disaster risk reduction processes. The Strategy secretariat enhanced its presence in Africa, the Americas and Asia and the Pacific, which included new units in Addis Ababa, Johannesburg, South Africa and Kobe, Japan. New regional offices were established in Geneva and Cairo. Close to half of the Strategy secretariat resources are allocated to work in the regions.

21. The first meeting of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Scientific and Technical Committee was hosted by UNESCO in January 2008. It provided specific reviews aiming at ensuring a sound scientific base is available for ongoing Strategy system processes, including the preparations for the second session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

22. As requested by the Hyogo Framework for Action, the Strategy secretariat developed a set of generic indicators and an HFA-Monitor, online reporting tool for national authorities, available from www.unisdr.org, to measure progress in achieving disaster risk reduction goals.

23. In 2007, a comprehensive public web portal on disaster risk reduction, PreventionWeb (www.preventionweb.net), was launched by the Strategy secretariat. This tool aims to support national actors to enhance their knowledge and ability to undertake action. It links to relevant existing information sources and provides a venue for collaboration, dissemination of practical information including standards and guidelines, lessons learned and access to expertise, networks and tools, such as a virtual library on disaster risk reduction. It provides online communication tools such as e-mail groups and online workspaces.

[9] FAO, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UNDP, UNEP, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), WFP, the World Health Organization (WHO), WMO and the World Bank.

E. Investing in disaster risk reduction

24. A substantial increase in investment in disaster risk reduction worldwide is urgently required if the goals and objectives of the Hyogo Framework for Action are to be attained by 2015. While some progress has been made, the magnitude of resources available for disaster risk reduction falls well short of that required to ensure that the resilience of nations and communities is built.

25. The United Nations and the World Bank have jointly initiated an assessment on the economics of disaster risk reduction, in order to provide a sounder evidence base for raising awareness and political commitment for disaster risk reduction, and to provide guidance on options for investment and interventions. The results will be available in 2009.

26. A number of donor countries, including Australia, Denmark, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, are enhancing policies for the integration of disaster risk reduction into their development and humanitarian funding programmes. Developing countries, such as Bangladesh, the Islamic Republic of Iran and South Africa are also making substantive investments for disaster risk reduction, which have already helped reduce disaster casualties. Despite those positive developments, the allocation of resources for the implementation of the Strategy is slow and insufficient; many more countries need assistance and guidance to address this challenge.

27. Voluntary contributions[10] to the United Nations Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction have improved steadily, as called for by General Assembly resolutions. However, the growing demands on the Strategy secretariat to ensure adequate support to the follow-up activities to the Hyogo Framework for Action, such as those reflected in the Strategy system joint work programme require substantial increases in the volume of funding and the timeliness, if the activities are to be successfully implemented. The expanding scope of work of the Strategy system work programme and the secretariat's workplan for the biennium 2008-2009, amount to $42 million in 2008 and $48.6 million in 2009. While 40 per cent of commitments are pledged for the secretariat biennial workplan by mid-2008, the financial commitments by donors to the system joint programmes have been very poor so far. Member States are encouraged to make multiannual, unearmarked contributions as early in the fiscal year as possible, and ideally in the first two quarters of the calendar year.

28. In its resolution 62/192, the General Assembly stressed the importance of disaster reduction. Noting the subsequent growing demands on the Strategy secretariat, the Assembly also pointed out the need to review the current methods of financing the secretariat, with a view to stabilizing its financial base, and requested the Secretary-General to submit a proposal for that purpose.

29. As noted in the present report and past reports, the relevance of reducing risks is increasingly evident, as is the role of the United Nations to support countries in

[10] In addition to the contributions from the World Bank and European Commission, the following Member States have provided contributions to the Trust Fund over the past year: Australia, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Norway, the Philippines, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

reducing the vulnerability of people. The challenges ahead are rapidly increasing. In order to leverage and multiply international cooperation efforts aimed at reducing vulnerability of communities and supporting the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, the Strategy secretariat performs management and key support functions in the areas of intergovernmental and inter-agency facilitation, resource mobilization and advocacy, knowledge management guidance and reporting. Some tangible results include the creation of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, the development of regional and national platforms, strategic partnerships with the World Bank and the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement, and joint work programming among key United Nations system agencies.

30. In spite of the clear need for, and centrality of the work of the United Nations in disaster risk reduction, those activities are not well reflected in the current programme of work of the Organization. Indeed, the Strategy secretariat is exclusively financed through voluntary extrabudgetary contributions through the United Nations Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction. Contributions have increased over the years. However, in 2007, five donors provided over 80 per cent of all the contributions to the Trust Fund with a large degree of earmarking, providing little flexibility to the use of the funds. A sudden or unforeseeable drop of funding could cause a serious disruption in the secretariat activities in support of the whole community of Member States. Therefore, the Strategy secretariat has been actively seeking alternative methods of financing, including secondments from agencies and Member States. While those alternative means have strengthened the capacity of the secretariat to support specific initiatives, they have not ensured a minimum stability and predictability in the financing of key functions.

31. Overall, the current financing provisions for the Strategy secretariat do not assure an appropriate degree of financial stability and predictability, and thus put at jeopardy its key functions. While the Trust Fund should remain the main funding mechanism for the Strategy and partnership activities, it is essential to secure a stable and predictable flow of resources to support the basic performance of the secretariat's key functions. Therefore, Member States may wish to review whether the provisions of General Assembly resolution 54/219 should be revised to include assessed contributions.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

32. The impact of disasters on the loss of lives, property and livelihoods continues to escalate, owing to unsound development practices, rapid urbanization, degraded environmental assets and large numbers of vulnerable people, particularly the poor. In addition, climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of extreme weather events. While many countries have been able to reduce death tolls from disasters, much more needs to be done to invest in and systematically implement disaster risk reduction measures. Disasters caused by vulnerability to natural hazards are holding back progress towards halving poverty and the achievement of other Millennium Development Goals.

33. Following the first session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Strategy system has been strengthened, in order to provide better support to national and local actors from regional offices and through thematic and inter-

agency partnerships. Several countries are setting up or strengthening their national platforms or other national mechanisms for disaster risk reduction. However, 147 countries have not yet established national platforms, and 66 countries lack official Hyogo Framework for Action focal points.

34. Good progress has been made in promoting, at the policy level, disaster risk reduction knowledge, experience and mechanisms as existing and proven measures for adapting to climate change, particularly through the Bali Action Plan. However, apart from a few examples, this has not yet translated into concrete and effective action at the country level.

35. Despite the increased commitment by Governments and other stakeholders, Governments are still not on track to achieve the goals set in the Hyogo Framework for Action. A lack of awareness, commitment and resources still remain the main obstacles. While there is a growing recognition of the benefits of investing for disaster risk reduction, financial resources available for disaster risk reduction are still insufficient at all levels. A major scaling-up of efforts and resources is needed.

36. While the voluntary contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction have improved, as called for by General Assembly resolutions, the growing demands on the Strategy secretariat to ensure adequate support and follow-up to the Hyogo Framework for Action require substantial increases in the volume of funding and the timeliness of its receipt. In that context, the current financing provisions for the secretariat do not ensure the necessary degree of stability and predictability.

37. Moreover, if the Hyogo Framework for Action is to be effectively implemented, increased contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction will be needed to fill, by 2009, the current gap of more than $70 million to support the work of various organizations involved in the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction system joint work programme.

38. On the basis of the preceding observations, the following recommendations are proposed.

(a) Accelerate the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, including through Strategy system mechanisms

39. **In order to achieve more effective implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, it is critical that Member States strengthen their cooperation through the existing Strategy system mechanisms, including national and regional platforms and the second session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held in Geneva, from 15 to 19 June 2009. Building on the good experiences of existing national platforms, Member States are strongly urged to develop and strengthen such national coordination mechanisms for disaster risk reduction.**

(b) Ensure synergy between climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction

40. **Recognizing that disaster risk reduction plays a crucial role in safeguarding development gains from the threats posed by climate change, I encourage Member States to ensure coherence and synergy between climate change and disaster risk reduction agendas, through strong linkages between the Governmental entities responsible for climate change policy and for**

disaster risk reduction. This could include participation in multi-stakeholder platforms for disaster risk reduction by all concerned entities, including those responsible for climate change. Moreover, Member States are encouraged to conduct a baseline assessment of the status of disaster risk reduction and related adaptation efforts in their countries, and to prepare national adaptation plans drawing on the Hyogo Framework for Action.

(c) Invest in disaster risk reduction

41. **Member States are encouraged to ensure that practical measures are taken to reduce disaster risk, particularly of the poor and most vulnerable, with adequate resources. To that end, Member States should consider setting targets for public spending on multi-year disaster risk reduction programmes at the national and local levels. I encourage Governments, donors and funding institutions to increase their investment in disaster risk reduction substantially, as an integral component of all programmes for humanitarian action, economic and social development and environmental protection, including those addressing the Millennium Development Goals, and to improve coordination and tracking of those investments.**

(d) Strengthen the funding arrangements for the Strategy

42. **Considering the substantially increased responsibilities of the Strategy secretariat and the need for commensurately predictable and stable financial resources, I call on Member States and Strategy stakeholders to augment their financial contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction to ensure adequate support for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, including for the Strategy system joint work programme.**

43. **In order to stabilize and make more predictable the financial base for the Strategy secretariat and its key functions, I draw the attention of Member States to the funding provisions of General Assembly resolution 54/219, which Member States may wish to review to include assessed contributions.**

Annex I

Additional information on progress made in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action[a]

1. The following information is organized based on the five priorities for action set out in the Hyogo Framework for Action and by national, regional and international level of implementation.

A. Action at the national level

Priority 1
Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis

2. Cape Verde, Italy, Kazakhstan, Lesotho, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Sweden established platforms during the reporting period. Panama and Tajikistan consolidated their existing platforms, and the Swiss national platform celebrated its tenth anniversary. The Dominican Republic and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela took steps towards the establishment of national platforms. Maldives, Montenegro, Nepal and Thailand recently joined with designated focal points for the Hyogo Framework for Action.

3. National strategies or action plans for disaster risk reduction have been developed by the Governments of Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Tajikistan, Thailand and Vanuatu. Several countries in the Asia region, including Indonesia, adopted new bills institutionalizing disaster risk reduction as part of their policy frameworks. The Maldives Government is currently finalizing a National Disaster Management Act. Others, such as the Philippines and Timor-Leste, are in the process of doing so. Countries that have recently passed new acts on disaster risk reduction, such as India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, undertook activities to strengthen their national disaster management authorities.

4. The Philippines National Conference on Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction in Local Governance helped to improve coordination between the national and local level, and increase access to development funds for local level risk reduction. The Islamic Republic of Iran has balanced budgetary allocations for disasters, and is now allocating 25 per cent for prevention and preparedness, 20 per cent for response and 55 per cent for reconstruction. In India, over 150 civil society leaders launched the National Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction to serve as a platform for community-led disaster risk reduction initiatives. Senegal's national platform for disaster risk reduction launched a national disaster reduction network of parliamentarians in 2008.

5. A network of European platforms, which includes France, Germany and Switzerland, has actively contributed to the European Union green paper on climate change, to ensure linkages with disaster risk reduction. Horizontal collaboration has become instrumental for sharing information and experiences among national platforms. Germany, Italy, Norway and Switzerland have supported "twinning" of national platforms in Europe and developing countries by facilitating exchange and

[a] Complementing section III of the present report.

training between them. The national platforms of Madagascar and Senegal initiated South-South partnerships on disaster risk reduction.

6. UNDP supports national Governments in establishing and strengthening institutional and legislative arrangements for disaster reduction and recovery, and in mainstreaming disaster reduction in development processes through its Global Mainstreaming Initiative and national and regional capacity development programmes. UNDP has fielded National Disaster Reduction Advisers in 13 high-risk countries with a further 12 countries planned for 2009. They provide technical support in the development of national disaster risk reduction strategies and assist UNDP country offices, United Nations system agencies and, in some cases World Bank country offices, to help develop multi-year capacity development programmes.

7. The Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery of the World Bank has expanded its technical assistance to 54 countries with activities promoting disaster-sensitive development planning and catastrophe risk insurance pooling; and helping countries to develop market-based crop insurance strategies and assess economic and financial impacts owing to natural hazards, prepare risk atlases, and deliver risk reduction strategies, including climate modelling and risk management. Recognizing the vital role of South-South partnerships in achieving poverty reduction objectives and attaining the Millennium Development Goals, a South-South cooperation programme was launched in May 2008.

Priority 2
Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning

8. Risk assessments are essential as starting points for reducing disaster risk, as has been proven by many community-based, local, national and regional efforts. Under the auspices of the Global Risk Identification Programme, the establishment of disaster loss observatories has been initiated in a number of countries.[b] The Programme is also working in several countries[c] to build local capacities for disaster risk analysis.

9. A Central American Probabilistic Risk Assessment,[d] a risk modelling platform and risk atlas, helps national authorities to make better founded investment decisions. Nicaragua is the first country to use the model.

10. Many gaps and obstacles still remain regarding the development of people-centred early warning systems. In the Indian Ocean region, the Governments of Mauritius, Seychelles and Sri Lanka organized national consultation meetings to identify national priorities for enhanced tsunami early warning systems.

Priority 3
Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels

11. The impact of disasters can be mitigated if people are well informed about feasible measures to reduce vulnerability. Numerous conferences and training workshops were conducted and training materials published for different audiences,

[b] Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Maldives, Mexico, Mozambique, Nepal, Panama, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

[c] Chile, Maldives, Mexico, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Peru and Sri Lanka.

[d] With support from the World Bank and the Strategy secretariat.

by a wide range of actors. Several countries included disaster risk reduction components in school programmes and media, including television, radio and Internet.

12. Nigeria embarked on a project to mainstream disaster risk reduction into school activities. In Nepal, students were trained to become "risk reduction ambassadors". In India, a programme helped some 100,000 students and 2,500 teachers to develop school disaster management plans. In Bangladesh, innovative e-learning tools on climate and flood risk management were developed for classroom training and self-learning. Tajikistan integrated disaster risk reduction into primary and secondary school curricula. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan introduced the topic into the formal curricula of leading technical universities.

13. The Islamic Republic of Iran allocated $4 billion for the strengthening of 250,000 school classes within five years, and the same amount for the construction of new safe school buildings. These achievements are the culmination of efforts made by the Iranian Ministry of Education and the Islamic Republic of Iran-based International Institute of Earthquake Engineering and Seismology. Workshops on seismic safety were conducted in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan for secondary school headmasters.

14. In Central America, national knowledge fairs took place in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama to raise public awareness of existing tools and lessons learned in disaster risk reduction. Countries around the world celebrated the International Day for Disaster Reduction on 10 October by organizing advocacy activities at national and local levels.

Priority 4
Reduce the underlying risk factors

15. Limited progress has been made in reducing underlying risk factors related to changing social, economic, and environmental conditions, as well as to climate change.

16. Improved building safety standards have been promoted in Central Asia. A group of experts in seismology and earthquake engineering developed a guidebook on safer building practices in rural areas, based on low-cost traditional knowledge, disseminated in local languages in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, while booklets on "Earthquakes and safer building strategies" and "Floods, mudflows, landslides and safer construction" were published and disseminated through universities.

17. National authorities and international development partners in Malawi and Mozambique launched programmes to mainstream disaster risk reduction in national development plans.

18. To mainstream disaster risk reduction in climate and hazard sensitive economic sectors, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) committed to support line departments, extension services, municipalities and farmers organizations to identify and implement enhanced and better coordinated disaster risk reduction practices for the agriculture and food sectors.

Priority 5

Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels

19. Many countries, among them Colombia, Honduras, India, Mexico, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Uruguay, have strengthened their capacities in preparedness, including developing contingency plans, community preparedness and drills. With support from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Comoros, Madagascar, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the United Republic of Tanzania have strengthened their national tsunami early warning and information sharing with local communities. In Thailand, UNDP supported several training events to strengthen the National Disaster Warning Centre's ability to deal with media and to enhance the accuracy and credibility of warnings and other public awareness messages. The Centre organized a national tsunami drill entitled "the Andaman Wave 2007".

20. In Pakistan, the National Disaster Management Authority[e] is preparing disaster risk and recovery baseline studies in disaster-prone districts and standard operating procedures for post-disaster livelihood assessment at the district level to help to guide response in the immediate aftermath of future disasters triggered by natural hazards.

B. Action at the regional level

21. **Africa:** The African Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, called for by the African Heads of States at the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa in 2004, forms the basis for the commitment of African States. The African Union assisted the Economic Community of West African States and the Southern African Development Community with support from the World Bank and the Strategy to develop more proactive approaches to disaster reduction.

22. A sub-Saharan Africa workshop held in Dakar brought national platforms and ministries of finance together to assess their role in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into national poverty reduction plans, and to learn of post-disaster assessment methodology.[f] Ghana, Madagascar, Nigeria and Senegal have included disaster risk reduction approaches in their poverty reduction strategies.

23. **West Asia and North Africa:** The Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport of the League of Arab States hosts and contributes to the Strategy secretariat's new regional office in Cairo and promotes risk reduction in the region. The Strategy partners have organized several regional workshops in Cairo to agree on actions and collaboration on risk assessments, information sharing, community-based risk reduction and climate change adaptation. The Strategy key documentation and standards were translated into Arabic and Russian.

24. The League of Arab States discussed a working agreement with the Strategy to include disaster risk reduction as part of their political and technical meetings. The Organization of the Islamic Conference agreed in their biannual General Meeting on Cooperation to work with the Strategy on awareness-raising of the Hyogo

[e] Supported by the United Nations system (FAO, the International Labour Organization and others).

[f] Organized by the African Union, the United Nations/International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the World Bank with collaboration from Senegal and UNDP.

Framework for Action at the highest levels; and to contribute to capacity-building among its member States nationally, regionally and globally.

25. Countries in Central Asia agreed in November 2007 to work towards strengthened regional collaboration in preparedness for disasters, through the creation of a regional centre for preparedness.

26. A regional centre opened in September 2007 in Mashhad, Islamic Republic of Iran, as a specialized agency of the Economic Cooperation Organization, with the objective to promote cooperation between member States for effective risk management, especially in the fields of meteorology, climatology and hydrology.

27. **Asia and the Pacific:** In the region, the Strategy secretariat facilitated a series of consultations to help to identify challenges and explore possibilities for strengthening existing regional supporting mechanisms and coordination. This culminated in the establishment of the Asia Regional Platform, which was formally adopted at the second Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Delhi, held in November 2007, along with the Delhi Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction. This committed Governments to accelerate implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, including action plans and mechanisms for periodic review, monitoring, reporting and linkages to the Millennium Development Goals.

28. Member countries of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific reiterated their commitment to disaster risk reduction, through a resolution adopted in May 2008 on "Regional cooperation in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters in Asia and the Pacific".[g]

29. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in collaboration with the Strategy secretariat, supported an initiative to integrate risk reduction into school curricula and promote guidelines for school safety. The Strategy secretariat co-organized with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNESCO in Bangkok a regional workshop on school education and disaster risk reduction, to stimulate dialogue on education for disaster preparedness between practitioners, curriculum developers and policymakers from countries throughout the region and adopted a Bangkok Action Agenda. Following the workshop, eight national institutes from China, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vanuatu agreed to conduct a situational analysis of policies, programmes, curricula and school-based activities and materials in relation to the integration of risk reduction into school curricula and teachers' training.

30. **The Americas:** The Rio Group emphasized at its twentieth Group Summit of Heads of States the need to support initiatives of the Strategy system in the region and called upon nations for more active participation in advancing their national platforms, exchange of good practices and policies that support disaster risk reduction.

31. The High-Level Conference on Risk Reduction, Mitigation and Recovery from Natural Disasters in the Greater Caribbean, held in Haiti in November 2007, resulted in increased political commitment and adoption of a Regional Disaster Risk

[g] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2008, Supplement No. 19* (E/2008/39), chap. IV, resolution 64/2.

Reduction Action Plan. It evaluated regional progress in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action, promoting national platforms, mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction, gender and adaptation to climate change, and policy frameworks with special focus on collaboration among the small island developing States.

32. In May 2008, Central American and Dominican Republic ministries of education and other national authorities approved the Regional Strategic Framework for Education on Disaster Risk Reduction to regulate the education sector throughout Central America and the Dominican Republic.

33. Preparations for the mid-2009 regional platform on disaster risk reduction have begun, with the Organization of the American States playing a major role, in collaboration with subregional entities, such as the Central American Coordination Centre for Natural Disaster Prevention, the Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Response, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency and the Association of Caribbean States.

34. **Europe:** The Council of Europe, through its European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement, is facilitating the development of a regional platform on disaster risk reduction and cooperation in the field of major disasters triggered by natural or technological hazards between Eastern Europe, the South of the Mediterranean and Western Europe, focusing on sharing good practices, supporting country assessments and implementing activities to reduce vulnerability. With the Strategy secretariat, it will support national platforms in monitoring and reporting on progress made in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action. In April 2008, a second meeting of European national platforms and focal points agreed on further collaboration and support towards the development of national platforms and progress reporting in the region.

35. The Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern-Europe committed with a strong training component to the Hyogo Framework for Action on risk assessment, early warning and disaster mitigation. The Strategy secretariat and the World Bank, involving many partners from the United Nations, the European Commission, bilateral agencies and Governments in the region, developed the South-Eastern Europe Disaster Risk Mitigation and Adaptation Programme to reduce the vulnerability to hydro-meteorological and other hazards in the region.

36. In addition, within the European Union and the European Commission, a series of initiatives towards coherence and new policies on disaster risk reduction were initiated in response to the Hyogo Framework for Action. The European Commission adopted a communication on "Western Balkans: enhancing the European perspective", which will improve regional coordination mechanisms related to hydro-meteorological hazards.

37. In the area of education and school safety, the Council of Europe, in cooperation with the Government of Cyprus, organized a European and Mediterranean workshop on school disaster risk reduction in preparation for the forty-eighth session of the UNESCO/International Bureau of Education International Conference on Education, to be held in Geneva from 25 to 28 November 2008.

C. Action at the international level

Priority 1
Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis

38. A joint United Nations Development Group/International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Task Team on mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into United Nations programming processes at the country level was established. The overall goal is to increase and improve the country-level support to Member States to implement disaster risk reduction strategies and the Hyogo Framework for Action. The task team is currently finalizing guidelines on integrating disaster risk reduction into the common country assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework processes. It will also compile a set of methods, tools and resource bases for United Nations country teams to support implementation of strategies and policies at the national level.

39. UNDP supports a number of thematic platforms of the strategy, such as risk identification through the Global Risk Identification Programme, capacity development through the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative and post-disaster recovery through the International Recovery Platform. This recovery platform is chaired by the International Labour Organization and the secretariat is hosted in Kobe, Japan, by the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre, the Hyogo Prefecture and the Strategy secretariat.

40. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies launched a Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction in October 2007 to increase the International Federation's effort in reducing disaster risks among the most vulnerable communities where National Red Cross and Red Crescent operate.

41. The Strategy secretariat has increased promotion of gender mainstreaming. The focus is threefold: advocating the importance and necessity of gender-equality in achieving the overarching goal of the Hyogo Framework for Action; educating and mobilizing both men and women to promote gender equality in disaster risk reduction; and providing guidance and good practice for gender-sensitive policy and programme related to disaster risk reduction. The Strategy secretariat organized a multi-stakeholder expert meeting to advance policy guidance and development of training modules for capacity-building on gender and disaster risk reduction.

Priority 2
Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning

42. In response to the conclusions and recommendations of the Global Survey of Early Warning Systems (see A/62/340), WMO and several Strategy system partners, in collaboration with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Platform for the Promotion of Early Warning, have established a partnership to strengthen international cooperation in early warning systems, including joint initiatives, and to stimulate more systematic approaches to early warning systems. The WMO country-level assessment survey, covering 140 countries, indicated that 90 per cent of participating countries require guidance and standard methodologies for monitoring, and mapping of hydro-meteorological and climate-related hazards for the development of early warning systems from national to local levels. In response to that need, WMO has initiated projects for the development of hazard monitoring and mapping guidelines, as well as early warning system capacities for specific hazards

such as flash floods, sand and dust storms, storm surges and droughts, built upon regional cooperation. WMO, in collaboration with the World Bank, IFRC and a number of regional agencies is improving national and local early warning systems with national meteorological and hydrological services and civil protection and disaster risk management agencies.

43. The new United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs aims to support universal access to satellite technology used in early warning systems and other space-based information relevant to disaster risk reduction. During the launching workshop, experts discussed how to define user requirements, horizontal coordination, the framework of a knowledge portal, and a capacity-building framework.

44. The Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System was consolidated and regional arrangements for coverage are in progress after completion of the initial system in July 2006. The focus is on improved data-sharing policies to ensure that real-time information is communicated by national authorities to communities. At its fifth session, in April 2008, the Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System welcomed offers by Australia, India and Indonesia to act as Regional Tsunami Watch Providers, replacing by 2011 the interim service provided by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre in Hawaii and the Japan Meteorological Agency. The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, which coordinates tsunami warning system activities, including risk assessment, warning system training, emergency response and preparedness, established intergovernmental coordination groups for the North-East Atlantic and Mediterranean, and Caribbean regions and facilitated tsunami warning interests as an active partner in the Integrated Global Observing Strategy. In partnership with UNESCO and other partners of the Indian Ocean Consortium, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Platform for the Promotion of Early Warning supported 11 Indian Ocean countries to overcome gaps in national capacity for tsunami early warning systems. WMO completed the upgrade of the Global Telecommunication System in January 2008 in the countries bordering the Indian Ocean and adjacent seas. All countries can receive tsunami watch information and advisories within two minutes from the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre in Hawaii and the Japan Meteorological Agency, providing interim tsunami watch and advisory services.

45. UNESCO continued to strengthen international and regional networks on knowledge sharing and capacity-building for earthquake risk mitigation. In cooperation with Japan's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, an international platform on earthquakes and tsunamis was developed, including a research and training platform for earthquake disaster reduction. Earthquake risk reduction networks have been implemented in the Mediterranean and Asian regions. Similarly, the International Consortium on Landslides paved the way for the organization of a World Landslide Forum, to be held in Tokyo from 18 to 21 November 2008, under the aegis of the Strategy.

Priority 3
Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels

46. The Strategy secretariat worked with many partners on several databases on disaster risk reduction expertise, research resources and technologies (www.preventionweb.net) and published and disseminated information on disaster risk reduction good practices on gender, climate change and poverty reduction (available from www.unisdr.org).

47. The UNESCO-led International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Platform on Knowledge and Education supported the World Disaster Reduction Campaign "Disaster risk reduction begins at school" (2006-2007), which created a global momentum for strengthening disaster risk education and ensuring school safety. Many stakeholders throughout the world adopted the Campaign, representing the beginning of a systematic effort to achieve school safety and a "risk-aware" education. The Platform compiled a catalogue of educational materials to be shared over the Internet. The Council of Europe prepared a library of web-links in four languages. Many country-specific projects were initiated with ministries of education led by UNICEF and ActionAid, among others.

48. The ongoing 2008-2009 World Disaster Reduction campaign "Hospitals safe from disasters", supported by the World Health Organization and the World Bank, aims at better protecting the lives of patients, health staff and the public by reinforcing the structural resilience of health facilities; ensuring that health facilities continue to function in the aftermath of disasters; and better preparing and training health workers on preparedness plans that will keep health systems operational if natural hazards strike.

49. The United Nations Disaster Management Training Programme was redesigned into a Capacity Development for Disaster Reduction Initiative through a joint effort between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNDP and the Strategy secretariat. The initiative supported training in Algeria, Mozambique and Uganda and at regional level in South-Eastern Europe, and has initiated training for United Nations resident/humanitarian coordinators and other senior United Nations officials.

50. In partnership with the Strategy and international recovery platform, the ILO International Training Centre has developed a local level sustainable development training and course programme for disaster risk reduction and recovery planning, currently active in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Priority 4
Reduce the underlying risk factors

51. The Strategy secretariat is working with UNEP, the World Conservation Union and regional partners to strengthen national capacities to apply environmental tools and services for risk reduction. It builds on the issue paper, "Environment and vulnerability: emerging perspectives", developed in consultation with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Working Group on Environment and Disaster, leveraging environmental policies and practices for disaster risk reduction.

52. WMO, in close collaboration with the World Bank, the World Food Programme and the reinsurance sector, is facilitating meteorological, hydrological and climate information to support the development of financial risk transfer markets, identifying needs of those markets, and developing mechanisms to facilitate that information through the national meteorological and hydrological services.

53. The High-Level Conference on World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy, held at FAO in Rome from 3 to 5 June 2008, stressed the complexity of risks associated with the interactions between climate change, food security and ecological balance.

Priority 5
Strengthen the disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels

54. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee convened a session on humanitarian action and challenges, including climate change, both at its working level and at its Principals' meeting in 2008, in which the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action was stressed as a means to adapt to climate change. The Standing Committee endorsed the revised Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance aiming at United Nations country teams.

55. Development of the "Disaster Preparedness for Effective Response Guidance and Indicator Package for Implementing Priority Five of the Hyogo Framework"[h] was coordinated by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to help Governments and local authorities to strengthen disaster preparedness. The roll-out of the package was initiated in Uganda, Peru and Nicaragua. By request of the Governments of Angola and Zambia, the Office and UNDP organized disaster management workshops to strengthen the capacities at the national and district level.

56. To improve understanding of the impact of disasters on livelihoods, FAO and ILO developed a Livelihood Assessment Toolkit, tested in several countries including Bolivia, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines and the Solomon Islands. FAO developed a Rapid Agricultural Disaster Assessment Routine methodology, composed of an assessment model, database of historical disasters and agricultural system and the Geographic Information Systems to assess geographical distribution of the intensity of a disaster and affected agricultural production and values immediately after a disaster.

[h] Published by the Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (Geneva, 2008).

Annex II

International cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon

1. In response to General Assembly resolution 52/200 on international cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon, the 1998 Declaration of Guayaquil called for "immediate action to assess the feasibility of establishing an international centre for the research of the El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO)". the General Assembly also adopted the related resolutions 53/185, 54/220, 55/197, 56/194, 59/232 and 61/199.

2. Over the last five years, the Guayaquil-based centre, the International Research Centre on the El Niño Phenomenon, has consolidated its role in Western South America region particularly in identifying and monitoring the El Niño phenomenon, providing information products and tools, and establishing networks for broad dissemination, with over 16,000 contacts.

3. The Centre collects climate and oceanographic information from several international centres, as well as from national meteorological and hydrological services to monitor the climate and related hazards. That information is used to provide regional seasonal forecasting and a biweekly web-based bulletin. It is also used to create agriculture risk maps, sea surface analysis and forecasts, and a digital health climate information resource.

4. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) continues to facilitate development of an ENSO consensus report on engaging all the major climate centres around the world and facilitates regional climate outlook forums in different regions that analyse expected impacts on ENSO and other climatic regimes to various stakeholders. With assistance from the World Bank, WMO is initiating these forums in South-Eastern Europe and held the first workshop of its kind in 2008.

5. In South America, the International Research Centre on the El Niño Phenomenon (www.ciifen-int.org) has made it possible to follow up on the climate evolution and the El Niño and La Niña events in late 2007, providing accurate information about the medium-term forecast and expected impact to all stakeholders. However, the climate variability associated with ENSO, as well as seasonal variability and the impact of climate change, are still not properly addressed either in Western South America or elsewhere. A multimodal and multilevel Climate Information System for Agricultural Risk Management in the Andean Countries is being developed to address that shortcoming, with the support of the Inter-American Development Bank, and will be operational by the end of 2008. Its objective is to create a regional system for decision makers, planning institutions and end-users.